



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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TWO HUMAN SMUGGLING DROP HOUSES DISCOVERED IN SOUTH LA *146 migrants from Central, South America detained – two suspected smugglers arrested*

LOS ANGELES — Two Guatemalan men are facing federal human smuggling charges today following the discovery of two “drop” houses in South Los Angeles late yesterday that were being used to hold 146 smuggled migrants from Central and South America.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrived at the scene of the first residence at 853 West 80th Street at around 2:00 p.m. after receiving a request for assistance from the Los Angeles Police Department. At that location, ICE agents apprehended 60 illegal aliens, including two men suspected of helping orchestrate the smuggling plot. The group of smuggled migrants included 45 Ecuadorians, 10 Salvadorians, and 3 Guatemalans.

Less than five hours later, ICE received a call from the Los Angeles Police Department about a second drop house about 20 blocks from the first location. When agents arrived at the residence at 135 West 59th Place they found 88 smuggled migrants trapped inside the stiflingly hot home. The aliens told agents the smugglers locked them inside and fled after seeing media coverage about the discovery of the first drop house. Agents say the house was teeming with roaches and rodents and the rooms were littered with dirty clothes, discarded food, and human waste. The nationalities of the migrants in the second house are still being determined, but the majority are believed to be from Central and South America.

“This is another example of the greed and ruthlessness of those involved in the human smuggling trade,” said Loraine Brown, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Los Angeles. “To flee and leave these people essentially imprisoned in this home, it’s fortunate authorities arrived when they did.”

ICE’s initial investigation indicates the two drop houses were likely connected. Agents say the majority of the smuggled migrants reported crossing the border in Arizona and were destined for cities across the United States.

Federal charges are expected to be filed later today against two Guatemalan nationals taken into custody at the first location. ICE’s investigation is continuing and agents hope to identify higher-level operatives in the smuggling scheme.

ICE